

:: Extension Cord Safety ::

We use extension cords almost every day at work and in the home. They are useful devices, but can present a fire or shock hazard when either worn out or used improperly.

Types of extension cords

Extension cords come in both two and three-wire types. Two-wire extension cords should only be used to operate one or two small appliances. Three-wire cords are used for outdoor appliances and *electric power tools*. The third wire on this cord is a ground and this type of cord should never be plugged into any ungrounded electrical outlet. Only grounded extension cords are to be used with power tools, unless the tool is double insulated.

Construction sites require extension cords which are specified by the national electric code for hard usage or extra hard usage. Approved cords may be identified by the word "outdoor" or the letters "WA" on the jacket.

Care and inspection of extension cords

Extension cords must be treated with care and checked regularly for damage or deterioration. The cord itself should *never be pulled* to disconnect it from an electrical source; remove it by the plug. They should not be placed under rugs or furniture and should never be strung through doorways, windows, walls, ceilings or floors. Damaged cords present a potential fire or shock hazard and should be destroyed and replaced immediately.

An extension cord should never be used as a substitute for permanent wiring. They should not be fastened to a building or structure, even though staples are sold for this purpose at many hardware stores. Avoid plugging two cords together to make a longer one. It's best to use one cord in a continuous length from the receptacle to the appliance or tool. Extension cords that are either connected together or are too long will reduce operating voltage and operating efficiency of tools or appliances and may cause motor damage.

Extension cords are convenient devices that we often take for granted in our everyday activities, but they need proper care and attention. Use good housekeeping practices at home and at work to keep extension cords from being tripping hazards or becoming damaged. Inspect them regularly for wear and replace defective units.

Prevent potential electrical hazards that may lead to someone's injury!